





# An Analysis of Personal Deictic Expressions in Selected Victory Speeches of Ghanaian Presidents



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## ABSTRACT

The essential role that language plays in politics has engendered several studies exploring language use across different political subgenres, such as inaugural addresses, concession speeches, campaign speeches, victory speeches, and state-of-the-nation addresses. However, little has been done on the use of personal deixis (person deixis) in Ghanaian presidents' victory speeches. In filling this gap, this study adopted the qualitative approach using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) from the perspective of van Dijk to explore instances of personal deixis in the 2012 and 2016 victory speeches of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and President John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). In addition, the study used Levinson's (1983) framework of deictic expressions to analyze the data. The findings confirmed that all three categories of personal deictic expressions and their variants were used in the victory speeches of the two presidents. The results further show a few disparities in how the two presidents employed personal deixis in crafting victory narratives, regardless of political party affiliation. The study emphasizes the significance of deictic expressions in political communication, highlighting their influence on Ghanaian politicians' perceptions and ideologies. The study further recommends the effective use of deictic terms, tailored to specific contexts and target audiences, in political leaders' communication. It offers insights into deictic expressions employed by Ghanaian presidents to assert authority and promote collective identity. Ultimately, the study's findings contribute to a deeper understanding of linguistic strategies such as personal deixis used in political discourse.

*Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, presidents' victory speeches, deictic expressions, political discourse.*

## INTRODUCTION

In almost every human setting, language, a tool for social interaction, plays a vital role in political discourse. One key grammatical feature of most political speeches is the use of pointing words, which can be interpreted within the context in which these pointing words are used. The grammatical concept of *deixis* illustrates the significant role of language and context in interpreting utterances. Putri and

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Kurniawan posit that *deixis* is derived from the Greek term *deiktikos*, meaning to indicate or point out.<sup>1</sup> Yule asserts that deixis is a fundamental aspect of human speech, while Richards and Theodore view it as a linguistic element, like a phrase or word, that allows speakers to indicate a specific place, person, or time.<sup>2</sup>

Levinson argues that deixis may be grouped into five main categories: person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis.<sup>3</sup> Grundy emphasizes that three key deixis criteria (place, person, time) are essential for any human experience.<sup>4</sup> This assertion aligns with Yule's classification of deixis in communication.<sup>5</sup> Cruse groups Levinson's five types of deixis into two broad categories: major deixis (person, place, time) and minor deixis (discourse, social).<sup>6</sup> Deictic expressions have been an essential element in political speeches throughout history, as they can bolster a positive self-image and portray adversaries negatively. Van Dijk is of the view that person deixis may be used to ascribe positive characteristics to oneself and negative attributes to others, resulting in a favourable self-image and an unfavourable portrayal of others, or creating a division between *us* and *them*.<sup>7</sup> Politicians strategically employ person deixis and pronoun selection in their speeches, adapted to specific settings, issues, and intended objectives. Person deixis thus plays a vital role in political discourse by serving as a persuasive tool.

From Strazny's perspective, person deixis refers to linguistic expressions used to identify participants or individuals in an interaction.<sup>8</sup> Person deixis is conceptualized as "the identification of the interlocutors in a communication situation."<sup>9</sup> This type of deictic expression takes a triangular form, which helps establish a more precise distinction among the speaker, the addressee, and any other person.<sup>10</sup> This assertion presupposes that personal deictic functions are based on a three-part division: the speaker (the sender), the addressee (the intended recipient), and the intended audience (any other person who may not be present at the time of the interaction but may be referred to), on all of whom person deixis becomes functional. Personal deictic expression is primarily conveyed in communication through personal pronouns. Cruse sees person deixis as a communication process in which the sender assumes the first-person role (I) and the receiver the second-person role (you). In contrast, the third-person roles (they, he, she, it) relate to other essential participants in the communication process.<sup>11</sup>

The study of person deixis highlights the unique use of pronouns in English, which is crucial for constructing meaningful and grammatically accurate sentences.<sup>12</sup> Unlike languages such as Russian, Spanish, or Polish, English does not allow for the omission of the subject. In this context, political speeches in English might be perceived as more direct, since they do not allow for the concealment of the speaker, the referents, or the link between them.<sup>13</sup> For instance, politicians strategically use the pronoun *we* to align with specific groups while labelling others as outsiders. The pronouns *we* and *I* are used to identify the speaker or a group of individuals, including the speaker and their associates. The pronoun *you* refers to either a specific individual being spoken to or a group of people being addressed by a speaker. The pronoun *they* refers to persons in the third person category or to address opponents.

Politicians strategically employ pronouns to elicit favorable responses from the audience. They use person deixis to emphasise their accomplishments, establish a sense of closeness with the audience, foster unity with them, and distance themselves from specific political actions. They employ distinct

<sup>1</sup> Nanda Anggarani Putri and Eri Kurniawan, "Person Deixis in USA Presidential Campaign Speeches," *English Review: Journal of English Education* 3, no. 2 (2015): 190–200.

<sup>2</sup> George Yule, *Pragmatics* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Peter Grundy, *Doing Pragmatics*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> George Yule, *The Study of Language*, 4th ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Alan Cruse, *Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Teun A Van Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse Analysis," in *The Meaning of Ideology* (Routledge, 2013), 110–35.

<sup>8</sup> Philipp Strazny, *Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (Routledge, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Charles J. Fillmore, *Lectures on Deixis* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Suriya Bunyarang and Sooksil Prasongsook, "An Analysis of Deixis in Speeches of Famous Americans," *Journal of Buddhist Education and Research (Online)* 8, no. 2 (2022): 1–16.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Cruse, *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Stephen C Levinson, Laurence Horn, and Gregory Ward, "The Handbook of Pragmatics," Ed. Horn, LR and Ward, G. Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Anna De Fina, "Pronominal Choice, Identity, and Solidarity in Political Discourse," *Text - and talk Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 15, no. 3 (1995), <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1995.15.3.379>.

deictic expressions to develop and reconstruct their own and others' identities. As Hamdaoui confirmed, manipulating the pronominal system has a substantial influence on political speech.<sup>14</sup>

This study examines the types and meanings of person deixis employed by President Akufo-Addo and President John Dramani Mahama in their triumphal addresses. It further investigates whether there are any alterations in the use of deictic expressions by the two presidents affiliated with opposing political parties in Ghana.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have extensively studied political speeches, particularly emphasizing personal deixis. For instance, Quinto explored the use of person deixis in President Benigno Aquino's English-translated political speeches.<sup>15</sup> Quinto conducted a detailed examination of how Benigno Aquino skillfully established the deictic field in one of his political addresses, utilizing the theoretical frameworks of Hanks and Buhler.<sup>16</sup> The study's findings revealed that President Benigno Aquino established a deictic framework, positioning the Filipino populace at its core while placing his detractors in opposition.<sup>17</sup> The President positively assessed himself and his government, while expressing unfavorable views towards his opponents.

Adetunji examined two political speeches by President Olusegun Obasanjo using Levinson's framework of deixis. Adetunji argued that President Olusegun Obasanjo strategically employed deixis to create either a sense of connection or disassociation with specific actions carried out by himself or his subordinates.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the President, through deictic expressions, effectively convinces his audience to adopt specific viewpoints and positions on contentious issues. The two speeches, although given by the same person, used different deictic expressions. Thus, the frequent use of the personal pronoun *we* in the first speech conveyed a sense of inclusivity. In contrast, the second speech predominantly featured the speaker expressing his individual perspective through the pronoun *I*. The study further establishes that personal deixis is a powerful tool that political actors use to persuade their audiences and enhance their influence in political discourse and beyond.<sup>19</sup>

Håkansson researched the pronoun preferences of President W. Bush and President Barack Obama in their State of the Union addresses.<sup>20</sup> The study revealed that President Barack Obama used pronouns more frequently, whereas President W. Bush often utilized the deixis *you*. The study concluded that pronominal choices made by politicians in speeches vary depending on whether they wish to share accountability with peers.

Similarly, Hasan examined the use of in-group and out-group pronouns in Hosni Mubarak's speech during the January Revolution on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011. Hasan observed that Mubarak used pronouns referring to people outside his group more often than those referring to people inside his group.<sup>21</sup> Mubarak also used the pronoun *I* more frequently when addressing his listeners. This was done strategically to allow him to express his views and values to the audience. Hasan's research further reveals that the choice of pronouns in political speeches differs depending on the distribution of accountability.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Mariem Hamdaoui, "The Persuasive Power of Person Deixis in Political Discourse: The Pronoun 'We' in Obama's Speeches about the 2007-2009 Financial Crisis as an Example," in *European Conference on Arts & Humanities, Official Conference Proceedings*, 2015, 99–111.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Jay Mansarate Quinto, "Stylistic Analysis of Deictic Expressions in President Benigno Aquino III's October 30th Speech," *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature* 20, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>16</sup> William F. Hanks, "Explorations in the Deictic Field," *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 2 (2005): 191–220; Karl Buhler, *Sprachtheorie: Die Darstellungsfunktion Der Sprache* (Jena: Fischer, 1934).

<sup>17</sup> Quinto, "Stylistic Analysis of Deictic Expressions in President Benigno Aquino III's October 30th Speech."

<sup>18</sup> Akinbiyi Adetunji, "Inclusion and Exclusion in Political Discourse: Deixis in Olusegun Obasanjo's Speeches," *Journal of Language and Linguistics* 5, no. 2 (2006): 177–91.

<sup>19</sup> Adetunji, "Inclusion and Exclusion in Political Discourse: Deixis in Olusegun Obasanjo's Speeches."

<sup>20</sup> Jessica Håkansson, "The Use of Personal Pronouns in Political Speeches: A Comparative Study of the Pronominal Choices of Two American Presidents," 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Jasim Mohamed Hasan, "A Linguistic Analysis of In-Group and out-Group Pronouns in Hosni Mubarak's Speech," *Journal of Basrah Researches (Humanities Series)* 38, no. 2 (2013): 5–24.

<sup>22</sup> Håkansson, "The Use of Personal Pronouns in Political Speeches: A Comparative Study of the Pronominal Choices of Two American Presidents."

Bramley studied personal deixis in Australian political campaign speeches and political media interviews.<sup>23</sup> The study specifically examined how politicians conveyed their own identities, as well as those of their parties and adversaries. The study showed that deixis was employed to denote the level of association or separation between persons. It was also observed that politicians deliberately used pronominal allusions to cultivate various identities, thereby establishing clear links and boundaries between themselves and others.<sup>24</sup>

Allen, on the other hand, investigated how pronominal choices shape the identities of politicians, their parties, and their adversaries within political discourse. The study's data set consisted of six political speeches delivered by two renowned politicians, Mark Latham and John Howard. The study found that political figures tactically emphasise their favourable attributes and their opponents' unfavourable traits in their electoral campaigns to gain the electorate's favour and acceptance.<sup>25</sup> To do this, politicians use personal pronouns to refer to themselves and others and to invoke a wide range of identities from different viewpoints. Both speeches by the two politicians showed that personal pronouns, which denote oneself and others, as well as diverse identities and perspectives, have a substantial impact on perceptions and understandings of political communication. Specifically, the two political figures used personal pronouns to attack the opposition, legitimise their policies, and save face when faced with face-threatening questions.

Applying critical discourse analysis, Adegaju studied political speeches delivered during the power struggle between the civilians in Nigeria and the military from 1993 to 1998.<sup>26</sup> The study's data set included the inaugural speeches of three political leaders: M.K.O. Abiola, Sani Abacha, and Ibrahim Babangida. Adegaju specifically focused on personal deixis in conflict-related political speeches delivered during this period. The results showed that the three politicians used personal deixis to assert dominance in their efforts to influence voters' thoughts and actions. The study's findings support McGregor's view that political discourse is always politicised, sometimes without the speaker's intention.<sup>27</sup>

Many studies within the Ghanaian context have also examined political discourse from different perspectives. For example, Mwinwelle et al. investigated personal deixis in the concession speeches of the two prominent Ghanaian political leaders.<sup>28</sup> Using Critical Discourse Analysis, the researchers examined the 2012 and 2016 concession speeches of President Akufo-Addo and President Mahama, respectively. The study's findings indicated that President Akufo-Addo and his party distanced themselves from the loss by opposing the Supreme Court's decision affirming Mr John Dramani Mahama as president. President Mahama, on the other hand, conceded his loss but sought to project his accomplishments to cast himself and his party in a favourable light. The use of personal deixis by these two prominent Ghanaian politicians to achieve different communicative effects confirms Taiwo's view that language is a valuable tool speakers deploy, consciously or unconsciously, to achieve varying effects.<sup>29</sup>

Botchwey et al. examined the 2023 State of the Nation Address given by President Akufo-Addo.<sup>30</sup> The study utilised the Systemic Functional Linguistics concepts of theme and rheme, as projected by Halliday and Matthiessen.<sup>31</sup> After thoroughly analyzing this political sub-genre, the researchers observed that topical, interpersonal, and textual themes were all deployed as means of packaging information. Of these themes, the topical theme was used more frequently, followed by the circumstance theme. The process theme was the least represented. The findings further revealed that the textual theme predominantly appeared as conjunctions and conjunctive adjuncts. In contrast, interpersonal themes were

<sup>23</sup> Nicolette Ruth Bramley, "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'self' and 'other' in Political Interviews," 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Bramley, "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'self' and 'other' in Political Interviews."

<sup>25</sup> Wendy Allen, "Australian Political Discourse: Pronominal Choice in Campaign Speeches," *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 2, no. 27 (2007): 209–24.

<sup>26</sup> Adeyemi Adegaju, "A Stylistic Study of the Speeches of Some Key Actors of the 'June 12' Crisis in Nigeria (1993–1998)" (University of Ibadan, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Sue L T McGregor, "Critical Discourse Analysis: A Primer," in *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM*, vol. 15, 2003, 11–15.

<sup>28</sup> Mwinwelle, Adukpoo, and Morte, "Analysis of the Use of Personal Deixis in Concession Speeches."

<sup>29</sup> Rotimi Taiwo, "Satirizing Politicians and Public Officers in Nigerian Newspapers," *The International Journal of Language, Society and Culture* 22, no. 3 (2007): 19–28.

<sup>30</sup> Emmanuel Botchwey, Stephen Kwaku Duah, and Douglas Adade, "Thematic Analysis of President Akufo-Addo's 2023 State of the Nation Address," *Linguistics Initiative* 3, no. 2 (August 30, 2023): 140–56, <https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.32104>.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday and Christian M I M Matthiessen, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 4th ed. (Routledge, 2013).

mainly expressed through vocatives, modal adjuncts, and a limited number of finite verb operators. The core elements of the topical theme, which conveyed the main message, included participants and circumstances related to temporal location, duration, manner, cause, accompaniment, role, and perspective angle.

Also, Ankrah et al. investigated the inaugural addresses given by President John Agyekum Kufuor and President John Atta Mills.<sup>32</sup> The study adopted Critical Discourse Analysis as its analytical framework to explore the comprehensive thematic structure of the Inaugural Address, to unravel the ideological stances of these two politicians, and to further account for the differences and similarities in their ideological positions. The study found that President Kufuor was more direct in his speech, projecting his capitalist ideology and condemning the previous government. President Mills, on the other hand, was less critical of other governments but projected a socialist ideology and sounded more appealing to his audience.

Similar to the research focus of Ankrah et al., Amoakohene et al. explored texture in the inaugural addresses of presidents from Ghana and the United States of America.<sup>33</sup> The study used SFL theory as its theoretical framework, complemented by a corpus-assisted method for analysing texts. The research examined a collection of sixteen Presidential Inaugural Addresses delivered by various presidents from the United States and Ghana. The results indicated that both Ghanaian and American presidents employed four types of grammatical cohesive devices, each with varying frequency, to create coherence in their speeches. Notably, American presidents used a wider range of grammatical cohesive devices than their Ghanaian counterparts.

From another perspective, Kyeremeh et al. examined the roles of metaphors in selected speeches by President John Dramani Mahama.<sup>34</sup> To conduct a critical examination of the speeches, the researchers employed critical discourse analysis, with a particular focus on critical metaphor analysis, as the study's framework. Kyeremeh et al. reported that metaphors were deployed in the speeches to create coherent social interactions. The findings further revealed that the metaphors deployed by President John Dramani Mahama were a cognitive phenomenon rather than merely a lexical one.<sup>35</sup>

With the same focus as Kyeremeh et al., Wiredu studied metaphors in President Nkrumah's speeches using critical discourse analysis to unravel metaphorical constructions.<sup>36</sup> The findings revealed a series of metaphorically related utterances in President Nkrumah's speeches, which triggered social action. For instance, Dr Nkrumah primarily employed metaphors such as cruelty, shackles, hindrance, and force to depict colonialism, aiming to persuade the House of Commons to endorse the idea of independence for the Gold Coast. Thus, Dr Kwame Nkrumah strategically used metaphors to convey information and make the message more convincing.

Despite the extensive literature on political discourse, we observed a dearth of research on deictic expressions, particularly personal deixis, in Ghanaian presidents' victory speeches. It is in our quest to fill this gap that this study analyzes personal deixis in the victory speeches of two prominent Ghanaian presidents: President Akufo-Addo and President John Dramani Mahama.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on how language is used in social contexts to construct and maintain power relations among interlocutors. Hoepfner argues that the goal of CDA is to uncover the ideological systems of political dominance, control and power as well as the strategies used to discriminate between inclusion and exclusion in language use, which are frequently

<sup>32</sup> Gabriel Kwame Ankrah, Frimpong Dominic, and Kwasi Opoku, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Presidential Inaugural Addresses of the Fourth Republic of Ghana," *European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies* 2, no. 3 (2018).

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Amoakohene et al., "Testing Texture in Presidential Inaugural Address: Variation across Culture," *Globe: A Journal of Language, Culture and Communication* 18 (2024): 1–17.

<sup>34</sup> Yaw Sarkodie Kyeremeh et al., "Analysis of Communicative Functions of Metaphors in Selected Political Speeches," *Universal Journal of Literature and Linguistic* 3, no. 1 (2023): 16–28.

<sup>35</sup> Kyeremeh et al., "Analysis of Communicative Functions of Metaphors in Selected Political Speeches."

<sup>36</sup> Sandra Addo Wiredu, "Rhetorical Analysis of the Use of Metaphor in Ghana's First and Former President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's Political Speeches," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* 3, no. 10 (September 30, 2021): 09–15, <https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2021.3.10.2>.

shaped by ideology.<sup>37</sup> Critical discourse analysts are mostly noted for exploring the existence of ideologically driven systems that display biased patterns of power, inclusion, and exclusion in text and talk. Van Dijk postulates that critical discourse research must fulfil specific criteria,<sup>38</sup> including analyzing discourse structures, accounting for social interactions and social structures, and exploring how language affects dominance and power relations in society.

CDA was used as the theoretical framework for this study because it has the potential to provide a deeper understanding of the choices and meanings of person deixis in the victory speeches of the two Ghanaian politicians. Secondly, the overall objective of this study is to analyse social interactions between politicians and their electorates through language, a task that Van Dijk considers one of the main focuses of critical discourse research.<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, the study of deixis is one central aspect of critical discourse analysis,<sup>40</sup> and, as such, makes CDA the best theoretical framework for this study, which explores person deixis in the victory speeches of two Ghanaian politicians.

CDA is further complemented by Levinson's framework of deictic expressions, which includes person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis.<sup>41</sup> This framework views person deixis, the focus of this study, as a type of deictic expression that grammatically refers to categories of persons. In Levinson's framework, person deixis involves pronouns that refer to the speaker, listener, and other entities pertinent to the conversation.<sup>42</sup> In other words, this framework divides person deixis into three sub-types: the first person (I, me, etc.), the second person (you, your, yours), and the third person (she, he, they, etc.). The selection of Levinson's (1983) framework of deictic expression was purposeful as it provides a wide range of referential expressions for analyzing deictic expressions, specifically person deixis, in both spoken and written texts.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Design and Approach

The study specifically adopted a qualitative research design as the method of inquiry because the analysis and discussion sections were skewed toward the descriptive approach, Creswell.<sup>43</sup> The researchers deployed a qualitative research design on the premise that it helps researchers to explore complex phenomena through in-depth analysis. To be more specific, we deployed qualitative content analysis, specifically, conceptual content analysis, to give a detailed account of the existence and frequency of personal deixis expressions in the victory speeches. In conceptual content analysis, as in this study, the content analyst selects a concept (in this case, personal deixis) for exploration and further quantifies its presence. From the perspective of conceptual content analysis, the interpretation of the concept under investigation is done by taking cognisance of the context in which the concept is used in a text or talk, Berelson.<sup>44</sup> That is, content analysis, in general, analyses texts in the context of their uses (Krippendorff).<sup>45</sup> Since the analysis and interpretation of the data in this study are primarily aligned with the methodological approach of qualitative conceptual content analysis (QCCA), it is appropriate to adopt QCCA as the methodological approach for this investigation.

### Data Source

The study uses online sources of victory speeches by President Nana Akufo-Addo and President John Mahama as its data. The speeches were accessed and downloaded from one of Ghana's official websites, <http://www.modernghana.com>. The two presidents belong to different political parties, the NDC and the NPP, making it comparatively advantageous to examine their usage of personal deixis. The study's dataset

<sup>37</sup> Yella Hoepfner, "Analysing the Beauty Advertisement Discourse: Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty," *Felicitas Macgilchrist: Media Discourse Analysis*, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Van Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse Analysis."

<sup>39</sup> Van Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse Analysis."

<sup>40</sup> Peter Mwinwelle, John Adukpo, and Favour Mawutorwu Randy Mortey, "Analysis of the Use of Personal Deixis in Concession Speeches," *International Journal of Art, Language & Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (2018): 11–23.

<sup>41</sup> Levinson, *Pragmatics*.

<sup>42</sup> Levinson, *Pragmatics*.

<sup>43</sup> John Creswell and Timothy Guetterman, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 6th Edition, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard Berelson, "Content Analysis in Communication Research.," 1952.

<sup>45</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Sage publications, 2018).

comprises 3316 words. Specifically, President Akufo-Addo's speech contains 1641 words, whereas that of President Mahama's consists of 1675 words. The two speeches that constitute the dataset for this study include the 2012 victory speech of President John Dramani Mahama and the 2016 victory speech of President Nana Akufo-Addo. The rationale for selecting these specific speeches is that, at the time we were gathering data for this study, President John Mahama had served just one term, whilst President Akufo-Addo had served two terms. To ensure that we had an equal number of speeches from these two presidents, we decided to use their first victory speeches. The number of words in each of the two texts is almost the same, and as such, we saw these two texts as highly comparable. Therefore, we did not see the need to normalise the frequency of the personal deixis identified in the two speeches.

### Data Analysis Procedure

To examine the data, the study used Cohen et al.'s textual analysis phases: creating natural units of meaning, organising and categorising these units, arranging narratives to convey the text or speech content, and interpreting the data.<sup>46</sup> Following Cohen's suggested processes, the speeches were segmented into sentences and used as illustrations for analysis. In addition, Levinson's theory of deixis was used as a framework for analysing the speeches.<sup>47</sup> The frequencies of each personal deixis were presented in a tabular format. We further conducted an in-depth analysis of the types of person deixis and the intentions behind their deployment in the speeches. For clarity and comprehension, the two speeches are coded as *AA* (Akufo-Addo) and *DM* (Dramani Mahama) in the analysis.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### *Types and meaning of person deixis in the corpora*

This sub-section examines the types and meanings of person deixis in the VSs of President Akufo-Addo and President Mahama. The study's findings reveal that all three categories of personal deictic expressions and their variants were used in the victory speeches of these two Ghanaian presidents. The frequencies of these linguistic items are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of person deixis in the speeches**

	Akufo Addo		Dramani Mahama			
	Person Deixis	Frequency	Person Deixis	Frequency	Total	Percentage
1 <sup>st</sup> Person Singular	I	26	I	48	74	21.2
	My	18	My	10	28	8.0
	Me	17	Me	9	26	7.4
1 <sup>st</sup> Person Plural	We	6	We	42	48	13.8
	Us	5	Us	7	12	3.4
	Our	26	Our	40	66	18.9
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	You	19	You	9	28	8.0
	Your	12	Your	7	19	5.4
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Singular	Him	3	Him	-	3	0.9
	His	13	His	1	14	4.1
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Plural	They	1	They	7	8	2.3
	Their	3	Their	11	14	4.0
	Them	5	Them	4	9	2.6
Total		154		195	349	100

<sup>46</sup> Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (Routledge, 2002).

### ***Instances of first-person singular pronouns across the speeches***

The analysis revealed that three forms of the first-person singular pronoun appeared in the corpora: *I*, *me*, and *my*. Among these, the speakers predominantly used *I* in their addresses. In his victory speech, President Akufo-Addo, as the president-elect, employed the pronoun *I* 26 times, whereas President Dramani Mahama used it 48 times. Examples of the use of the pronoun *I* can be found in Extracts 1-4.

1. *"I thank you, the good people of Ghana, for this massive show of support and the confidence you have reposed in me and my party."* [AA-S11]
2. *"...I am grateful to her for the announcement and her words of congratulation."* [AA-S8]
3. *"I am humbled to have been chosen by the will of the people, by you my fellow Ghanaians to be your leader."* [DM -S2]
4. *"I understand the overall significance of this moment, it is far greater than any single person."* [DM -S3]

The pronoun *I* is used to signify distinctiveness or personal identity. The two Ghanaian presidents used *I* to represent themselves in the political arena, thereby supporting Bramley's claim that politicians use first-person singular pronouns to present themselves as unique figures in the political landscape.<sup>48</sup> In Extracts 1 and 2, President Akufo-Addo, having been elected to office, employed *I* to demonstrate his intense gratitude and appreciation to various individuals and groups. President Akufo-Addo uses this personal pronoun to acknowledge the support and contributions made by others toward his victory. In Examples 3 and 4, the use of the first-person pronoun *I* creates a personal bond between the speaker and the audience. John Dramani Mahama, the president-elect, positioned himself as the central figure in his victory narrative. In Example 3, he acknowledges the honor bestowed upon him. This emphasizes his gratitude and humility. In Example 4, he recognises the weight of his responsibility and the collective nature of the victory, while still maintaining a focus on his role.

The employment of the personal deixis *I* enables both presidents-elect to project a sense of responsibility, leadership, authority, and individual commitment. It helps establish the speakers' identities as strong and decisive leaders capable of guiding the nation forward. The strategic use of *I* highlights the significance of the two presidents' responsibility in achieving victory. Thus, these two politicians deploy *I* to project themselves as pivotal individuals accountable for the election victory.

From Examples 5 to 8, it can be inferred that the presidents further employed the deixis *I* to signify their commitment to accountability and unwavering faith in democracy.

5. *"I make this solemn pledge to you today – I will not let you down and will do all in my power to live up to your hopes and expectations."* [AA -S12]
6. *"I will do my best to serve your interests, and put our country back on the path of progress and prosperity."* [AA -S35]
7. *"And as your president, I wish to reiterate my commitment to the growth and further consolidation of our democracy and its key institutions."* [DM -S15]
8. *"I assure you that your trust is not misplaced and then I will work hard for and on behalf of every Ghanaian."* [DM -S30]

Both presidents-elect, through their declaration, positively presented themselves to the people of Ghana. This affirms Bramley's statement that politicians aim to represent themselves and their groups positively, and that they do so by constructing a reality that reflects their own identities and those of others.<sup>49</sup> The presidents used *I* to reassure the audience, express confidence in fulfilling their pledges, and take the populace's expectations seriously. The use of *I*, specifically in Extracts 5 and 8, contributes to the formal and solemn tone of the speakers. It adds a sense of gravity to the pledge, indicating that the speakers are making a serious and sincere commitment.

Again, the presidents confidently used the first-person pronoun *I* in their speeches to affirm their role as president-elect. They expressed gratitude for the opportunity given to them by their competitors (Extract 11), family (Extract 16), the media (Extract 10), diverse working groups (Extracts 12, 14 and 15),

<sup>48</sup> Bramley, Nicolette Ruth. "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'Self' and 'Other' in Political Interviews." (2001).

<sup>49</sup> Bramley, "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'self' and 'other' in Political Interviews."

Ghanaians (Extract 9), and the divine entity (God) (Extracts 13 and 17) to serve in public office and the people of Ghana as well.

9. "...I say a big thank you to every one of you for your hard work, commitment and encouragement, and your belief in me and in my leadership of our party over the last 8 years." [AA -S18]
10. "I take this opportunity to thank you, members of the Ghanaian media, for your continuing engagement in the public interest of our country". [AA -S23]
11. "I have also received words of congratulations from my other competitors...". "I am grateful to them". [AA -S5]
12. "I thank the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)...., for their important work..." [AA -S26]
13. "I thank Almighty God for His grace and favour in granting victory to the NPP and myself in this election." [AA -S9]
14. "I want to thank the electoral commission and our security service personnel who helped maintain law and order." [DM -S16]
15. "I want to thank the external election observers who came to watch Ghanaians reaffirm their commitment to our constitution and to free and fair elections." [DM -S17]
16. "I must thank my wife and members of my family for their unwavering support and encouragement." [DM -S20]
17. "I thank the Almighty God for the life of every Ghanaian." [DM -S70]

Akoto suggests that politicians express gratitude to God in their speeches to acknowledge the existence of a supreme being and to recognize his direction and protection.<sup>50</sup> The presidents-elect expressed gratitude to God for their victories, thereby establishing themselves as believers in divine authority. They also expressed appreciation to the people for their trust and support. Nana Akufo-Addo, having been elected to the high office of president, extended personal appreciation to his opponent, John Dramani Mahama, using the word *I* to project a positive image and portray himself as a skilled statesman, as seen in Extract 18.

18. "...I thanked him (former President Mahama) for this graceful gesture, which is in the finest traditions of Ghanaian statesmanship and, on my part, assured him of my cooperation for a successful transition." [AA -S3]

Additionally, the speakers employed the first-person singular deixis *me* and *my* to clearly define their identities as individuals and as heads of their respective political parties. The person deixis *me* was used 17 times by President Akufo-Addo and 9 times in President Mahama's victory speech. Furthermore, President Akufo-Addo used the first-person singular pronoun *my* 18 times in his victory speech, while President Dramani Mahama used it 10 times. The first-person singular deixis *me* and *my* were used by the presidents-elect to acknowledge their governments and other members of their respective parties (see Extracts 19 and 22). They also used the first-person singular deixis to extend gratitude to their families [see Extracts 20 and 21].

19. "...I say a big thank you to every one of you for your hard work, commitment and encouragement, and your belief in **me** and in **my** leadership of our party over the last 8 years." [AA -S18]
20. "...to **my** beautiful wife, **my** beloved Rebecca, who waged such a great campaign in her own right, **my** daughters, Gyankroma, Valerie, Dokua, my sister Marigold, **my** brother Edward, and **my** entire family, I, firstly, must apologise for taking you on this rollercoaster ride." [AA-S28]
21. "I must thank **my** wife and members of **my** family for their unwavering support and encouragement." [DM-S20]
22. "I must thank **my** campaign team for their hard work and commitment to our course." [DM-S21]

<sup>50</sup> L. Akoto, "A Lexical Cohesion Analysis of Two Ghanaian Presidential Inaugural Speeches: A Study of 2001 and 2009 Speeches" (University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, 2016).

### ***Instances of first-person plural pronouns across the speeches***

The inclusive first-person plural pronouns *we*, *us*, and *our* were used in the speeches analysed. President Akufo-Addo used the pronoun *we* 6 times, whereas it appeared 40 times in President Mahama's victory speech. The first-person plural pronoun *we* was employed to refer to the speaker and his associates (exclusive *we*). Aside from referring to the presidents and their associates, the pronoun *we* was also used to refer to the speaker, his associates, and the addressees (inclusive *we*). The inclusive *we* was mainly used to convey a sense of unity, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility. The president-elect, through the use of inclusive *we*, urged Ghanaians to unite and address issues of national interest (see Extracts 23 and 24).

23. *"Together, we will change Ghana and use all the blessings that the Almighty has bestowed on us to bring prosperity to our people and nation in our time."* [AA-S38]
24. *"Every time we empower ourselves individually and collectively to play an active role in shaping our country's future, all of us can claim victory."* [DM-S7]

The speakers also used the exclusive *we* to denote their persona and their political parties, namely the NPP of President Akufo-Addo and the NDC of President Mahama. Adegaju avers that politicians employ first-person plural pronouns to foster the perception of an equal connection among individuals united in pursuing a common political objective, with an emphasis on prioritising the nation's welfare.<sup>51</sup> This means that the exclusive pronoun *we* refers to the presidents (the speakers) and the governing body they represent, including members of their political parties. The deixis *we*, *our*, and *us* are used to signify group membership and convey a sense of institutional identity.<sup>52</sup> Following their respective election victories, the presidents used the term *we* to refer to their government's executive organ. Through this deixis, the presidents present their party positively as one that understands democratic values [Extract 25] and ensures the continuity of governance [Extract 26].

25. *"We are the party of the rule of law, and we should act accordingly with magnanimity in our moment of victory."* [AA-S20]
26. *"Finally, as I promised during the campaign, I wish to dedicate this victory to the memory of Professor John Evans Atta Mills and I wish to pledge that we shall continue the good works that he started."* [DM-S67]

There were 26 instances of the first-person plural *our* in President Akufo-Addo's victory speech and 40 in that of President Dramani Mahama. The person deixis *our* was used inclusively to refer to both the speakers and the people of Ghana. This is illustrated in Extracts 27-30. The reflexive first-person plural pronoun *ourselves* was also used to inclusively identify the speakers and their addressees (Ghanaians) (see Extract 29).

27. *"Together, we will fulfil the destiny of Ghana, the destiny of freedom, justice, and prosperity that the ancestors and founders of our nation defined for us."* [AA-S39]
28. *"...This election has contributed to strengthening the principles of democratic accountability in our body politic and the Commission will take a considerable part of the credit for that welcome outcome."* [AA-S15]
29. *"It is faith in ourselves as Ghanaians and faith in our ability to rise above adversity and overcome the challenges that faced us that have brought us this far."* [DM -S10]
30. *"I am grateful to have had the opportunity to engage with my fellow candidates and I would like to say to them, though we have stood as opponents on what appear to be different sides of a divide at the end of the day, we all are standing on the same side of our beloved mother Ghana."* [DM -S33]

Employing inclusive deixis, *us* helps establish a bond between the speakers and the other political parties participating in the elections. Instances of this linguistic item were five (5) in President Akufo-Addo's speech and seven (7) in that of President Dramani Mahama. Bramley asserts that the phrases *all of us* and *us all* create a sense of inclusion that encompasses every individual.<sup>53</sup> The presidents, in their

<sup>51</sup> Adegaju, "A Stylistic Study of the Speeches of Some Key Actors of the 'June 12' Crisis in Nigeria (1993–1998)."

<sup>52</sup> Schegloff, Emanuel A., H. Sacks, and G. Jefferson. "Lectures on Conversation." (1992): ix-lxiii.

<sup>53</sup> Bramley, "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'self' and 'other' in Political Interviews."

speeches, emphasised that solving the nation's challenges is not the responsibility of any political party but of every Ghanaian. They therefore stress the need for cooperation among all individuals to address the issues facing Ghana as a nation (See Extracts 32 and 33). The two presidents again portray themselves as competent politicians who prioritise not only their parties' interests but also the advancement and well-being of the broader population. This is evident in Extract 31.

31. *"Together, we will fulfil the destiny of Ghana, the destiny of freedom, justice and prosperity that the ancestors and founders of our nation defined for us."* [AA -S39]
32. *"Every time we empower ourselves individually and collectively to play an active role in shaping our country's future, all of us can claim victory."* [DM -S7]
33. *"It is faith in ourselves as Ghanaians and faith in our ability to rise above adversity and overcome the challenges that faced us that have brought us this far."* [DM -S10]

### **Instances of second-person pronouns across the speeches**

Second-person deixis mostly appears to be among the least common categories of deictic expressions in political discourse.<sup>54</sup> The findings of this study support this statement, demonstrating the infrequent use of the second-person pronouns *you* and *your* as against the frequency of occurrence of other personal deixis in the speeches. President Akufo-Addo used the deixis *you* 31 times, while it appeared 16 times in President John Mahama's victory speech. Allen asserts that political leaders employ the deixis *you* as a rhetorical strategy to present themselves as superiors addressing their subordinates and, to a large extent, to shape their subordinates' reasoning.<sup>55</sup> The speakers employed the pronoun *you* to denote apolitical institutions, such as the media (See Extracts 35 and 37), thereby disassociating the press from political affiliations. They again used the pronoun *you* to address Ghanaians, who constitute the immediate audience of the speech. This is exemplified in Extracts 34 and 36.

34. *"Fellow Ghanaians, you have not elected me to serve one party, but to serve the entire nation."* [AA-S32]
35. *"I take this opportunity to thank you, members of the Ghanaian media, for your continuing engagement in the public interest of our country."* [AA-S23]
36. *"It does not matter whom you voted for, every time we engaged in the democratic process, Ghana is the winner."* [DM-S6]
37. *"I want to thank the media; you did a fantastic job. God bless you."* [DM-S39]

### **Instances of third-person singular pronouns across the speeches**

The third-person singular deixis *his* and *him* were the least used in the data. President Akufo-Addo used *his* 13 times and *him* 3 times. However, President John Dramani Mahama used *his* only once, and there was no instance of *him* in his victory address. The usage of these pronouns creates a sense of familiarity and is a means the presidents use to draw the audience into their narrative. These deictic expressions, *him* and *his* help build rapport, establish credibility, and reinforce the speaker's message. In Extracts 38 and 39, President Akufo-Addo used the personal deixis *his* and *him* to build rapport with his fierce contender, President Mahama. President Mahama, through the use of the pronoun *his*, buttressed the relevance of his proposition by referring to the words of Dr Kwame Nkrumah (see Extract 40).

38. *".... John Dramani Mahama, called me on the phone to congratulate me on my victory in the presidential election of 7th December 2016. He wished me the best of luck and God's blessings and assured me of his full cooperation in organising the transition from his administration to mine."* [AA-S1&2]
39. *"I thanked him for this graceful gesture, which is in the finest traditions of Ghanaian statesmanship and, on my part, assured him of my cooperation for a successful transition."* [AA-S3]

<sup>54</sup> Adetunji, "Inclusion and Exclusion in Political Discourse: Deixis in Olusegun Obasanjo's Speeches."

<sup>55</sup> Allen, "Australian Political Discourse: Pronominal Choice in Campaign Speeches."

40. "In closing, I want to echo the words spoken by our founding father Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah on March 6th, 1957 upon our independence. He was addressing the nation, celebrating the victory and offering a reminder.... I think **his** words are as relevant today as they were then." [DM-S60-65]

### **Instances of third-person plural pronouns across the speeches**

The third-person plural pronouns (they/their/them) were also used in varying degrees by both presidents. These types of pronouns appeared nine (9) and twenty-two (22) times in President Akufo-Addo's and President Mahama's speeches, respectively. The deixis *they*, *their*, and *them* were used when the presidents refer to collective entities with which they are affiliated. The presidents express a favourable stance toward their referents by using the pronoun *their*. The referents of *their* in the victory speeches encompass various groups, such as the electoral commission (See Extract 41), international election observers (see Extracts 42 and 44), and party members who died during the campaign period (See Extracts 43 and 45).

41. "She and the Commission have allayed the fears of many about **their** capacity to conduct a good election". [AA -S15]
42. "I thank the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) for **their** important work..." [AA -S26]
43. "May **their** souls continue to rest in perfect peace in the bosom of the Almighty until the last day of the Resurrection when we shall all meet again, Amen." [AA -S31]
44. "I want to thank the external election observers who came to watch Ghanaians reaffirm **their** commitment to our constitution and to free and fair elections." [DM -S17]
45. "...May **their** souls rest in perfect peace." [DM -S54]

The pronoun *them* was used to unite all reference groups into a single entity. This confirms Bramley's idea that inclusiveness unites diverse groups around a common purpose.<sup>56</sup> In Extract 46, President Akufo-Addo used the deixis *them* to refer to individuals with whom he had competed in the presidential race. President Dramani Mahama used the deixis *them* to connect the various political parties. This is illustrated in Extract 47.

46. "I have also received words of congratulation from my other competitors, ... I am grateful to **them**." [AA- S5and 6]
47. "I will like to say to **them**, though we have stood as opponents on what appear to be different sides of a divide at the end of the day, we all are standing on the same side of our beloved mother, Ghana." [DM-S33]

Both speakers again employed third-person plural deixis *they* to denote stakeholders, party members, and the people who have trusted these presidents during the election process. Bramley suggests that politicians operate in a world characterized by oppositional, affiliative, and neutral relationships with the *other self* expressed through third-person pronouns.<sup>57</sup> The speakers used *they* to indicate or establish neutral connections or relationships with the media and the Ghana Peace Council, which are supposedly politically impartial, as evident in Extracts 48 and 49.

48. "I want to thank the media for the coverage **they** gave all of us." [AA -S37]
49. "I also wish to thank the Ghana Peace Council for the very great role **they** played in overseeing this election and ensuring that it came to a peaceful pass." [DM -S35]

### **Differences and similarities in the use of personal deixis in the victory speeches of the two presidents**

There were differences and similarities in the use of personal deixis in the victory speeches of the two presidents. Figure 1 visualizes the use of personal deixis in the corpora.

<sup>56</sup> Bramley, "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'self' and 'other' in Political Interviews."

<sup>57</sup> Bramley, "Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of 'self' and 'other' in Political Interviews."

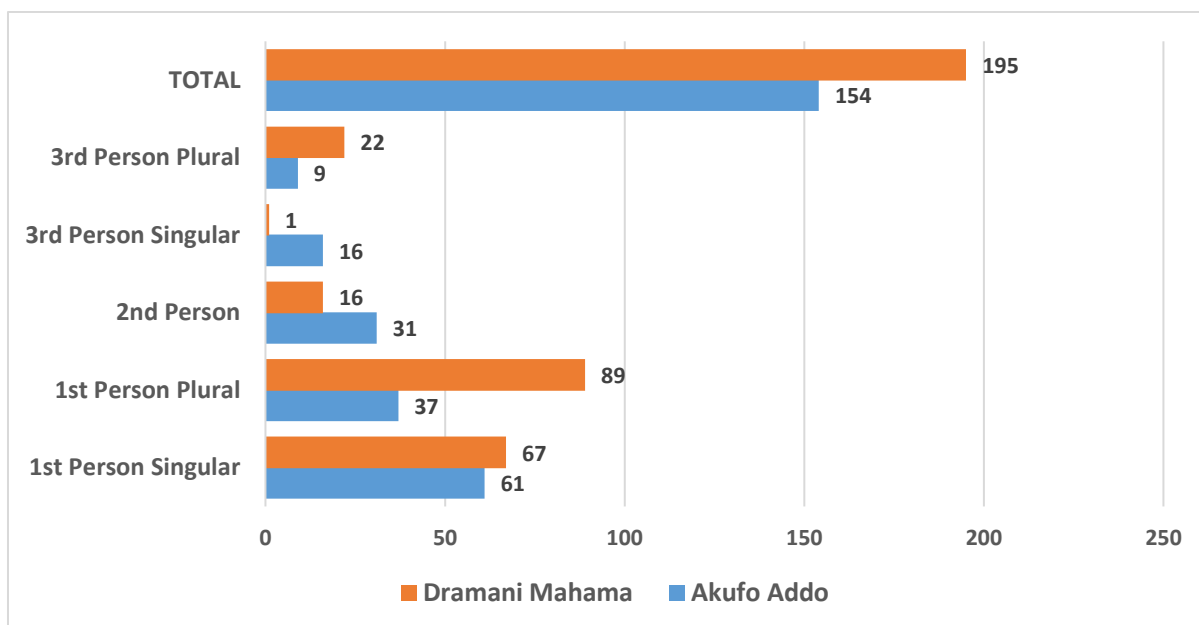


Figure 1: Frequencies of person deixis in the corpora

Figure 1 clearly shows that in their victory speeches, both President Akufo-Addo and President Mahama employed all three categories of personal deixis and their sub-types. Both leaders frequently utilized the first-person pronoun and its forms. Thus, the singular and plural first-person pronouns were the most commonly used personal deixis in the speeches. In President Mahama's address, the first-person plural form was the most prevalent pronoun, appearing 89 times. In contrast, in President Akufo-Addo's speech, the first-person singular form was the most frequently used personal deixis, occurring 61 times. Additionally, both presidents used the third-person singular form sparingly.

From a semantic perspective, the two presidents used the pronoun *I* to signify their distinct individual identities in the political sphere and project a positive image of their personalities. Both presidents used the first-person pronoun *I* to indicate their contributions and responsibilities in the victory. Additionally, both presidents acknowledged the contributions of other parties and individuals to their victories. The presidents used the second and third-person pronouns to recognise the significant contributions and roles of their political parties (party members), the electoral commission, international electoral observers, flag-bearers of other political parties, and the general Ghanaian population.

However, there was a key difference in the use of first-person deixis: President Akufo-Addo used it to express personal appreciation for his opponent, President John Dramani Mahama. Unlike President Akufo-Addo, President Mahama used the first-person deixis *I* to establish a positive self, take responsibility for his victory, assert his commitment to leadership, and express gratitude to other stakeholders. President Nana Akufo-Addo's use of the first-person pronoun *I* to express personal appreciation for President John Dramani Mahama is a notable departure from traditional political rhetoric. This deliberate choice highlights a significant difference in their communication styles. While both leaders aimed to project a sense of unity and national pride, President Akufo-Addo's acknowledgement of his opponent is interpreted as a gesture of statesmanship and respect. He positions himself as a magnanimous leader willing to acknowledge his opponents' contributions. This approach fosters a more positive and constructive political discourse, even amid intense competition.

Another observed similarity is the relatively small proportion of third-person deixis used by both presidents. The various forms of the third-person deixis (him/his/they/their/them) were the least used personal deixis in both victory speeches. The limited use of the third-person pronouns in the victory speeches could be attributed to the celebratory nature of the event and the speakers' desire to forge a personal connection with their audience. It is seen as a strategic choice by both presidents to avoid distractions from the central message, minimise references to external factors or groups, and maintain focus on their vision and future goals.

Both speakers employed first-person and second-person pronouns in their speeches to establish intimacy and shared purpose. An observed difference, however, was in the use of the third-person singular

pronouns *him* and *his*. While there were 13 and 3 instances of *his* and *him*, respectively, in President Akufo-Addo's speech, President John Dramani Mahama deployed *his* only once but did not deploy *him*. Akufo-Addo's heavy use of these pronouns suggested his focus on external factors and his quest to position himself as a strong leader capable of influencing external forces (people, events, and situations). This rhetorical approach allowed him to distance himself from potential shortcomings and shift responsibilities to others. In contrast, President John Dramani Mahama's near non-use of these pronouns indicates a more inward-focused approach. His speech emphasised collective identity and emotional connection with the audience, fostering unity and shared purpose. He thus aligned himself with the people's aspirations and concerns by minimising references to external factors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is situated within the broader context of discourse analysis. It presents one of the few studies to explore language use, specifically person deixis, in the victory speeches of presidents with different political affiliations in a non-native speaker context. It is recommended that presidents use deictic expressions effectively, tailoring their use to the specific context and audience to ensure clarity and precision in communication. Also, future studies should consider the impact of gender, cultural and contextual elements on the employment of deictic expressions in political communication. This study will be advantageous to a range of stakeholders, including politicians, educators, and the public, by offering more profound insight into the use of deixis in the victory speeches of two notable Ghanaian political figures.

## CONCLUSION

The study explored the role of deictic expressions in shaping narratives of victory and political identity. It specifically analysed the type of person deixis used in the victory speeches of two presidents in Ghana. Further, it explored whether there are differences in the use of person deixis by these two presidents, who belong to different political parties. The study has demonstrated that deictic expressions are predominantly deployed in political speeches, specifically, victory speeches. The two personalities studied commonly used person deixis like *I*, *we*, *us*, *you*, *they*, *them*, and *their* to convey either positive or negative representations. Person deixis, therefore, serves as a key grammatical concept that shapes the two presidents' identities and perceptions of reality, thereby enhancing their eligibility for the presidency. The study further confirms minimal differences in the use of person deixis between the two speeches given by speakers from different political parties. Both presidents-elect employed nearly similar deixis to establish a positive image of themselves. The study's findings suggest that presidents who strategically employ deixis in speeches can enhance communication effectiveness, emotional resonance, and audience engagement, ultimately contributing to the success of their rhetorical objectives.

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